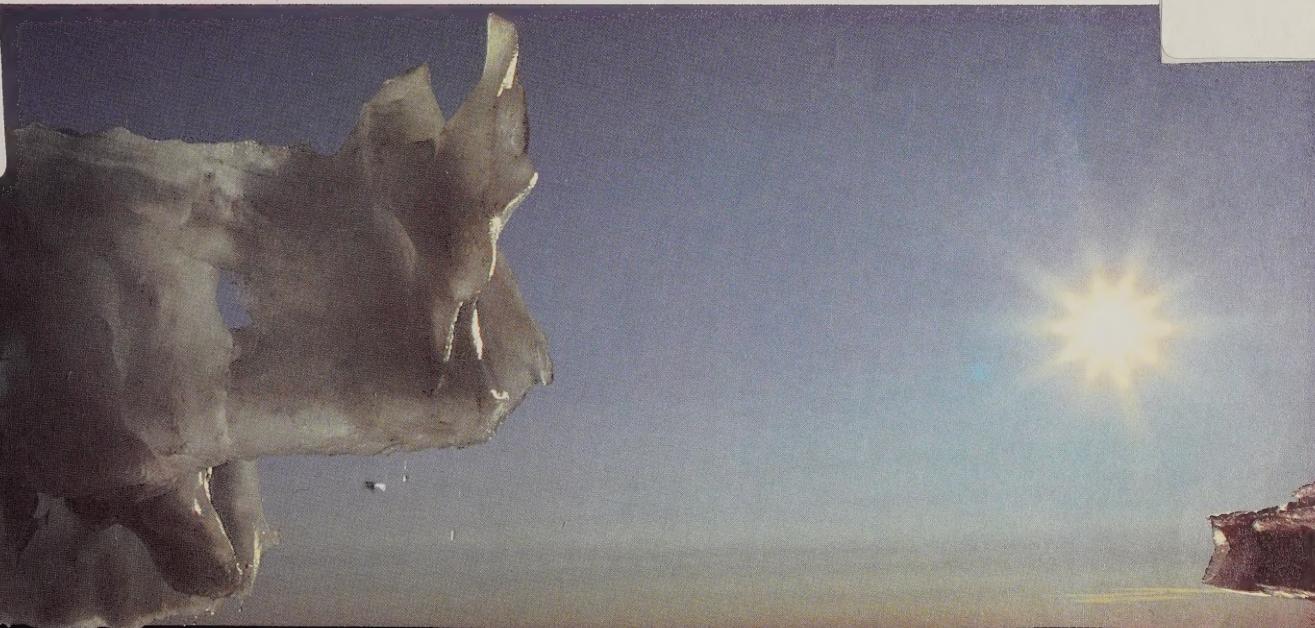


POLAR  
PAM  
6069

POLARPAM



A  
HOSTILE  
BEAUTY





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
University of Alberta Library

<https://archive.org/details/hostilebeautyexh00barb>

# A HOSTILE BEAUTY

An Exhibition organized for circulation by the  
MACDONALD STEWART ART CENTRE  
Guelph, Ontario

Rec'd: MAY 13 1987  
Order No.:  
Price: ~~Gift~~  
Acc. No.:

BOREAL INSTITUTE  
LIBRARY

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Since its inception, fine photography has achieved the level of art by surpassing the mere reproduction of image. Many schools of thought arose and photographs were and are used for social commentary and documentation, for abstract expressions of light and plane and also as a means of heightening awareness of reality—in effect making us see with a new clarity of vision.

By viewing these photographs of the north, we are seeing the landscape in a unique way with a definite focus on one area. We are compelled to examine the scene in isolation, allowing us to appreciate certain aspects that may well be lost were we casually glancing at the same scene while on the site. What we have is one moment of perception. Cartier-Bresson, discussing this in 1952 said: "Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant."<sup>\*</sup>



Cat. no. 4

These photographs are of great interest because their merit lies not only in their value as scientific and environmental documents, but as expressions of appreciation. The landscape had a great effect upon the scientist-photographers: the majesty, the hostility and the beauty of their surroundings evoked an artistic sensitivity to composition, colour, tone and light rarely seen in photography used to record scientific research.

The photographs are also important visual documents of the landscape which harbours the Inuit and they lead us to a better understanding of the surroundings which inspire the art of the Eskimo. The peculiar lack of distal relationships and perspective as conceived in western thought is evident in the Inuit concept of distance as time and is also apparent in their two and three-dimensional art.

Carving skills among the Inuit date to prehistoric times, providing a rich tradition and understanding of three dimensional expression. Initially the items carved were small amulets

and utensils, often with an animal motif and becoming more utilitarian as years passed.

In the 20th Century, and especially since 1950, the Inuit have been encouraged to continue this tradition as a means of livelihood. Modern Inuit sculpture is carved from many kinds of soapstone, from fossilized whalebone and from tusks. The subject matter ranges from depiction of spiritual beliefs and legends to representations of traditional lifestyle now rapidly disappearing with the advent of modern technology and conveniences.

Despite the vast distance between the many northern communities, Inuit sculpture shows distinct stylistic elements. Life on the land and a tradition of oral history lends sympathy to animal imagery and great sensitivity to narrative or symbolic works. The very nature of the medium also tends to give the sculpture great imposing mass, volume and presence no matter how small it may be.

"A Hostile Beauty," through the photographs and sculpture, serves to introduce a magnificent and unique aspect of our world.

\*Henri Cartier-Bresson, THE DECISIVE MOMENT

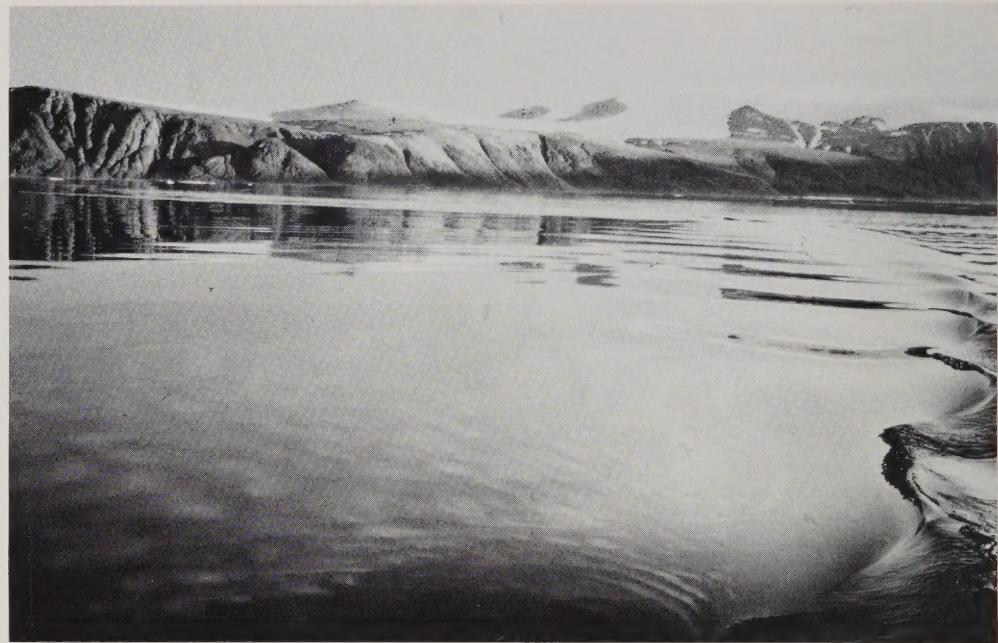
(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952)

LYNN BARBEAU,  
Curator  
Education/Extension  
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre

*The colour photographs are by Dr. Ron Brooks, Dr. Vernon Thomas and John Hickie of the University of Guelph Zoology Department and by Norman Lightfoot from the Office for Educational Practice, University of Guelph. A slide programme which accompanies the exhibition features Inuit drawings and sculpture depicting the landscape, Inuit life and arctic wildlife. Additional slides are included courtesy of John Sprague of the Zoology Department and Helen Gerson, a former graduate student studying biology.*

*This exhibition of photographs is enriched by Inuit sculpture from the permanent collection at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre. The Centre's Eskimo art collection is generously supported by Omark Canada Ltd. whose donations of art purchase funds have been matched by grants from the Canada Council and Wintario. A number of Eskimo carvings, drawings and prints have also been donated by individuals.*

*A travelling version of the exhibition will be shown during 1984 and 1985 in schools of the Wellington County Board of Education and the Wellington County Roman Catholic Separate School Board systems.*

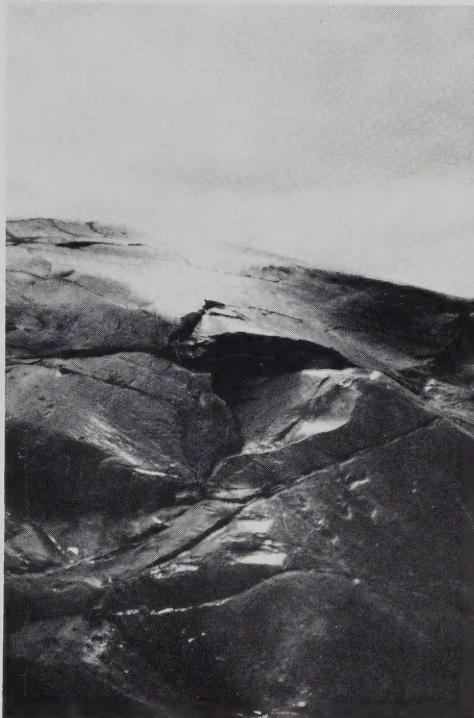


Cat. no. 12

*The organization and touring of "A Hostile Beauty" has been funded by the High School Liaison Program of the University of Guelph.*

## ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE

Ten thousand years ago the Queen Elizabeth Islands were covered by expansive domes of permanent ice. The years following this Ice Age witnessed their gradual disappearance, save for the huge ice caps persisting on much of Devon, Ellesmere and Axel-Heiberg Island. This ice and the continual erosion of bare rock has shaped the contours of the land in the High Arctic. To observe this landscape is to recapitulate Earth's history, from its fiery beginnings to its present rising from the arctic seas. Old granite and sandstone outcrops lie opposed to new limestone strata formed by the accretion of minute marine life forms. Elsewhere coral remnants attest to this land having once been part of some vast ocean shelf which teemed with life of a different kind. This hostile mantle has been little colonized by plants and it readily displays its texture and a myriad of colours and tones.



Cat. no. 2

Life has come slowly to this geological world, and where it has appeared, it is sparse and circumscribed by the darkness of winter and the extreme northern cold. These islands are frigid deserts, yet where water and a sheltering crevice exist, small plants lead a tenuous existence despite the capricious climate.

In the north, nature's scale is vast, and we perceive size and distance with difficulty because of the lack of objects familiar to our culture. Land forms appear as abstractions especially when they lack the greens we identify with southern landscape.

This land has not been inhabited, except formerly by small migrant groups of Thule Eskimos, and even today the Inuit venture only to its southern fringe. Their perceptions of this environment reflect its peculiar dimensions and foreboding nature.

This exhibition presents features of both the high and low arctic landscape. In the high arctic one sees the polar desolation, with its highly eroded forms and vivid colours, a starkness unrelieved by the presence of plants. The vastness of ice is revealed in the different moods of sea ice floes and infinite glaciers. Occasionally life is represented too. By contrast the low arctic regions show a much greater presence of flora and fauna.

DR. VERNON THOMAS,  
Professor, Department of Zoology,  
University of Guelph



Cat. no. 16

# PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE EXHIBITION

## RON BROOKS

1. Lichen on Rock, Hudson Bay 1972
2. Rock, Hudson Bay 1981
3. Sunset, Churchill, Manitoba 1980

## JOHN HICKIE

4. Bladder Campion - North Baffin Island 1978
5. Flood Plain - Western Arctic 1981
6. Midnight Sun - Igloolik, High Arctic 1979
7. Tremblay Sound, North Baffin 1978
8. Tremblay Sound, North Baffin 1978
9. Tremblay Sound, North Baffin 1978

## NORMAN LIGHTFOOT

10. Arctic Willow - Ellesmere Island 1977
11. Cumberland Sound, Baffin Island 1977
12. Ellesmere Island 1977
13. Ice Floes - Jones Sound, North Arctic 1977
14. Pangnirtung, Baffin Island 1977

## VERNON THOMAS

15. Desert - South Ellesmere Island 1982
16. Desert - South Ellesmere Island 1983

## SCULPTURE IN THE EXHIBITION

### DIMU

Man Holding Whip,  
Soapstone, hide and plastic  
12 x 6 x 9.8 cm

### LEW

Bird, 1967  
Soapstone  
10.2 x 19 x 8.8 cm

### MAGGIE

Bird Perched on a Rock  
Soapstone  
9 x 11 x 4 cm

### SURUSILA, HARRY (POVUNGNITUK)

Walrus-like creature with human  
features  
Soapstone  
17.6 x 11.7 x 9.3 cm

## TAKKURAG, NELSON (GJOA HAVEN)

Owl  
Earbone of a whale, soapstone inset  
10.6 x 14.7 x 12.1 cm

UNIDENTIFIED  
Figure Holding Child  
Whalebone  
31.2 x 18 x 19.5 cm

UNIDENTIFIED  
Fisherman  
Stone with ivory and string  
25.4 x 19.1 x 12.7 cm

UNIDENTIFIED  
Spirit Mask  
Soapstone  
33.8 x 20.5 x 20.5 cm

UNIDENTIFIED  
Woman with Child In Her Amauti,  
Holding Two Birds  
Whalebone, soapstone inlay  
46.3 x 22 x 24 cm

©The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, 1984  
358 Gordon Street,  
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

**Canadian Cataloguing in  
Publication Data**

Main entry under title:  
A Hostile Beauty

Catalogue of an exhibition held at the  
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre, Guelph,  
Ont., Jan. 14-June 13, 1984, and travelling  
to other galleries.  
ISBN 0-920810-15-2

The Macdonald Stewart Art Centre is  
supported by its sponsors - the City of  
Guelph, County of Wellington, Wellington  
County Board of Education and the  
University of Guelph, by memberships  
and donations and by grants from the  
Ontario Government through the Ministry  
of Citizenship and Culture, Wintario and  
from the federal Government through the  
Canada Council and the National  
Museums of Canada.

1. Photography - Canada, Northern -  
Landscapes - Exhibitions. 2. Photography  
of polar regions - Exhibitions. 3. Inuit -  
Canada - Sculpture - Exhibitions.\*
4. Sculpture, Canadian - Exhibitions.
- I. Macdonald Stewart Art Centre.

TR 660.5.H67 1984 779.917192'074011343  
C84-098207-0

Design: Angela Shillum

Printing: Ampersand Printing

Exhibition Prints: Lumichrom Photo

Curatorial Assistant: Heather O'Hagan

Cover: JOHN HICKIE, Midnight Sun,  
Igloolik 1979

DATE DUE

99999 Pam: (\*41N)  
BAR

A hostile beauty : an exhibition  
organized for circulation by the  
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre,  
Guelph, Ontario

Borrower's Name

Date Due

99999

Pam: (\*41N)  
BAR

A hostile beauty : an exhibition  
organized for circulation by the  
Macdonald Stewart Art Centre,  
Guelph, Ontario

Boreal Institute for Northern  
Studies Library  
CW 401 Bio Sci Bldg  
The University of Alberta  
Edmonton, AB Canada T6G 2E9

University of Alberta Library



0 1620 0338 8723



MACDONALD STEWART ART CENTRE